

**QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR**



**Question submitted by:** Councillor Charlotte Holloway

**To Cabinet Member:** Cllr Dr John Mahony, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

**Question:**

To ask the member for Health, what the official advice is for Plymouth residents who are unable to get on the NHS waiting lists for dental care and require dental attention?

**Response:** ( for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

### **Devon and Cornwall Dental Helpline**

A unique dedicated helpline was developed for Devon and Cornwall to:

- assist patients in finding an NHS dentist for routine care
- arrange urgent NHS dental treatment for people who do not have a dentist
- help commissioners identify and respond to variations in demand

Practices are encouraged to point prospective new patients towards the helpline, so they can be added to a central list of people looking for a regular dental practice rather than being taken on directly. As a result, people are sometimes incorrectly under the impression that no practices are taking on new NHS patients. Instead, patients are allocated in batches as capacity becomes available, so those who have waited longest are prioritised. People who are prepared to travel further are likely to be found a place sooner than those who are not.

For those looking for dental care there are a number of options;

#### **Urgent dental care**

Plymouth Community Dental Service provides and manages in-hours appointments for patients with an urgent dental need who do not have access to an NHS dentist for patients in Plymouth. Torbay Community Dental Service offer the same service for patients in the Torbay area and the Dental Helpline manages the booking of appointments which are provided in practices throughout the rest of Devon. This service is for patients in need of relief from acute dental pain; acute infection; and bleeding or trauma.

Access to urgent dental care would normally be expected to be available within 24 hours of someone making contact with the service. Appointments are provided at a range of sites across Devon.

Only those people with a significant dental emergency, such as rapid facial swelling, uncontrolled bleeding or facial trauma, would be expected to be treated at accident and emergency departments.

The Dental Helpline also manages out of hours appointments for the whole of Devon. They provide appointments at the weekends and Bank Holidays in clinics across the county.

The South West dental commissioning team have recently launched an initiative to increase the number of urgent care treatment slots by asking practices to provide additional urgent care sessions. Three practices in Devon have been involved in providing urgent care sessions since December 2020.

#### **Urgent Care provided by Community Dental services**

Community dental providers, including Plymouth Community Dental Service (Livewell), Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust, Torbay Community Dental Service (South Devon and Torbay NHS Foundation Trust), offer some urgent care appointments, to support those who contact the Dental Helplines with urgent care needs to ensure that patients with urgent dental needs are able to be seen and treated.

#### **Additional routine dental care for those who do not have an NHS dentist by foundation dentists**

The Peninsula Dental School's education facilities in Plymouth and Exeter also provide one-off courses of treatment to patients who do not have an NHS dentist. Patients can access care by contacting the Dental School directly where they will be assessed as suitable to be treated by dental students under supervision.

**Stabilisation dental care for those who don't meet the criteria for urgent dental care and do not have a regular dentist**

A new dental offer will be put in place starting this winter in the South West called stabilisation dental care. This is for those who have had urgent dental care treatment but who still have additional dental problems that need addressing.

Patients accessing care via NHS 111 (or a dedicated local dental helpline) and who do not meet the urgent care criteria would instead be offered a stabilisation appointment for the following reasons:

- Mild or moderate pain that is not associated with an urgent care condition and responds to pain relief measures.
- Loose, broken or displaced crowns, bridges or veneers.
- Broken, lost or ill-fitting dentures.
- Broken or loose fillings.

This is particularly aimed at those patients who do not have a regular dental practice. The new service will be monitored and evaluated to ensure it is reaching those in most need.

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Q. King'.

**Dated:** 11 October 2022